

16. (Amended) An alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition comprising a solid solution represented by a composition formula $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8 , and Cu as an additive present in an amount of 0.001 to 5 mol%.

17. (Amended) The alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition according to claim 15, wherein said at least one additive is Cu, Li and Ta, each of them present as an oxide form in an amount of not more than 5 mol%.

22. (Amended) A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li and Ta to a powder of niobate represented by formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same,

wherein said additive powder is 0.001 to 5 mol% of Cu, and the blended powder of a niobate is $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8 .

23. (Amended) A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li and Ta to a powder of niobate represented by formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same, wherein the blended powder of a niobate is $Li_x(K_{1-y}Na_y)_{1-x}(Nb_{1-z}Ta_z)O_3$, wherein $x = 0.001$ to 0.2 , $y = 0$ to 0.8 , $z = 0$ to 0.4 .

25. (Amended) A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li, and Ta to a mixture of a powder of precursor compounds for the niobate represented by the formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same; and

giving piezoelectricity to the resulting sintered-substance in a process of a treatment, wherein said blended powder of a niobate is $K_{1-x}Na_xNbO_3$, wherein $x = 0$ to 0.8 .

Please add the following Claim 30.

(30. (New) A method for producing an alkali metal-containing niobate-based piezoelectric sintering material composition, comprising:

adding an additive powder containing at least one element selected from the group consisting of Cu, Li, and Ta to a mixture of a powder of precursor compounds for the niobate represented by the formula $ANbO_3$, wherein A is an alkali metal, then blending these powders together;

molding said blended powders and sintering the same; and

giving piezoelectricity to the resulting sintered-substance in a process of a treatment, wherein said blended powder of niobate is $Li_x(K_{1-y}Na_y)_{1-x}(Nb_{1-z}Ta_z)O_3$, wherein $x = 0.001$ to 0.2 , $y = 0$ to 0.8 , $z = 0$ to 0.4 .

BASIS FOR THE AMENDMENT

The claims have been amended to restrict them solely to the invention considered allowable by the Examiner.

Specifically, the claims considered allowable by the Examiner have been rewritten as independent claims, or claims dependent thereon, amended, where necessary, to overcome their rejection under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112.

The limitation added to Claim 17 finds basis in Examples 1 and 2 of the specification.

Claim 25 has been amended to include the limitations of Claim 22 considered allowable by the Examiner.

Added Claim 30 corresponds to Claim 25 having incorporated therein the limitations of allowable Claim 23.

REMARKS

Entry of this amendment and favorable consideration of this application is requested.

Claims 15-18, 22-25, 29 and 30 are in the case.

The interview kindly granted by the Examiner, Ms. Koslow, on November 6, 2001, is herewith acknowledged with appreciation. Agreement was reached at said interview that by amending the claims in a manner as directed above, such would overcome all of the rejections.

Specifically, no art rejection is made of the claims remaining in the case. The claims rejected over prior art, as well as under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112, have been cancelled or amended. Note that rejected Claim 25 now incorporates the limitations of allowable Claim 22.

With regard to the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, the supplementary amendment filed July 19, 2001, clearly makes moot the basis for this rejection.